

Evangelicals and Contemporary Anglican Liberal Theology

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In a recent article in *Theology*, Paul Gibson laments the decline of the 'liberal' or broad tradition in Anglicanism and its present-day lack of crusading spirit.¹ Amongst the principles that are necessary for a revival of liberalism, Gibson gives the following:

A liberal theology is one based on faith as life-style (discipleship) rooted in love of God and neighbour and paradigmmed in salvation myths; this story of salvation offers hope that the alienation of humanity's existential condition from its essential nature may be transcended.... Theology is the sorting and classifying of the symbols in which religious experience is articulated; it is not the development of legal or propositional systems or the proving of hypotheses.... The religious practice and the theology which enables it is essentially humanistic and this-worldly.... Revelation is more the exposure of the bones and sinews that lie within reality than the penetration of the sphere of reality from outside.²

Gibson's liberal *credo* emphasizes theological activity as a this-worldly enterprise; 'lifestyle' is seen as the essence of faith rather than its outcome, and the task of theology is seen as the analysis of experience within a religious frame based on an existentialist view of life. The tradition is plainly at variance with traditional Anglican confessionality, and indeed with the method of approach to theology which has been adopted throughout most of Christian history.

Contemporary liberalism is pervaded by uncertainty and caution stemming from a number of sources connected with the rise of historical relativism and the increasing complexity of analyses which are based on socio-economic evidence. Nicholas Lash has summarized these changes:

Living, as we do, a long time after Feuerbach, quite a long time after Freud, and in an intellectual climate heavily impregnated with the achievements of the sociology of knowledge, we are not likely to overlook the fact that our models of God are 'projections' of our human hopes and fears; that they are produced by, reflect and symbolically express, visions of man and patterns of human organization. But are religious and theological models simply, without remainder, 'projections' and social

symbolizations? If they are, then we can indeed continue to discuss the 'truth' and 'falsity' of theological claims but we should at least have the honesty to admit that in so doing, we are appealing to a notion of theological truth which is, in certain crucial respects, fundamentally discontinuous from that to which most of our Christian predecessors appealed.³

Evangelical Anglicanism reflects these debates within the wider theological scene over the relationship between the origin and authority of doctrine, and the expression of belief in the church and the contemporary world. The questions being faced by both evangelical and liberal are first, 'What is the origin of our doctrine?', and secondly, 'What is the relationship of what the church believes doctrinally to the Christian community and to the world?'

This article gives a brief description of recent trends in evangelical Anglicanism, followed by a summary of the contemporary expression of the liberal Anglican tradition. In conclusion, some suggestions are made concerning the task ahead for evangelicals who wish to make a contribution to the wider enterprise of Anglican theology.

Developments in evangelical Anglican theology

Since the mid '60s, and in particular the 1967 Keele conference, Anglican evangelicals have committed themselves to the study of the complexities of modern society and its 'structures'. This development has proceeded side by side with the traditional emphasis on personal conversion and personal Christianity. One of the newer trends is that in which the church is seen as a sign of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God into the present world-order.⁴ The communal life, or 'lifestyle', of the church is seen as a signpost which points people to the reality of life in the kingdom of God. The concept of witness is seen as not merely the passing on of a verbal message, but is extended to incorporate the expression of the life of the redeemed community to the surrounding darkness and social chaos. The spoken word of God can only be truly understood when it is spoken by those who see their role as active participants in changing the world order, or 'structures'. In this way the gospel is made relevant to the world.⁵ This re-emphasis on the social relevance of the gospel represents a positive gain over some introverted evangelical views which can easily become pre-occupied with their own internal problems, fall into a separatist view of the church, and undervalue the significance of the created order.⁶

However, this renewal of interest in 'the world' has brought with it tensions and frustrations within evangelical Anglicanism. There are those who regard the primary function of the church as preaching the message of salvation so that it can be understood by individuals who may then receive Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord. The tendency here is to understand the kingdom of God as essentially a future-orientated concept, even though we enjoy some of its fruits now. Then there are those who emphasize the importance of chang-

ing the face of society by practical application of the gospel and its implications so that God's love can be more clearly understood. There is a greater attempt to realize the kingdom of God in the here and now. Such people rightly see that there is little point in telling a man about his sins when he is in physical or social need. However, such an approach can easily become the victim of the frustrations brought about by efforts to change the system.

These variations of approach are typical of contemporary evangelicalism. They have caused some to wish for a closing of the ranks, and attempts have been made to identify a new 'liberal evangelicalism', albeit in rather vague terms.⁷ They fear a loss of evangelical identity. This phenomenon is best seen, not as a sudden post-Nottingham (1977) aberration but as a failure to understand the facts of theological and ecclesiastical life of the past twenty years. When these are taken into account, a number of reasons for the broadening of evangelical interest can be identified. First, evangelical Anglican commitment to the implications of the Christian message for post-war society came at a time when Christian understanding and practice were at a post-war low. Serious thought about the state of contemporary society was bound to exercise the conscience of Christians who felt they had a gospel to proclaim but saw widespread ignorance and misunderstanding of the message. Secondly, evangelical expansion took place in the wake of the theological ferment which had been popularized by *Honest to God* and the explosion of popular radicalism in the mid-1960s. It is certain that evangelicalism reacted defensively to this, and perhaps has taken to itself some of the theological caution and uncertainty which has been prevalent since then. Thirdly, insufficient attention has been paid to the depth of understanding of evangelical congregations by those whose responsibility it is to teach and pastor them.⁸ It is one thing to teach people the importance of being able to affirm their salvation from the pages of the Bible; it is more difficult to teach people to move forward in faith so that buildings, organizations and patterns of ministry may be revolutionized in order that people may see, hear and believe that God is really active today. Fourthly, activism unrelated to theological reflection can easily replace necessary theological spade-work. There is the ever-present temptation to relegate 'theology' to the realm of the unapplied and abstract while we get on with 'something practical'! However, there are signs of resistance to this, and of an awareness that some form of doctrinal development is urgently necessary for evangelical Anglican theology. Kirk, for example, maintains that

alongside our acceptance of the full authority of the Bible we also need a thoroughgoing and constant enquiry into the relationship between man's personal and social environment and his interpretation of the biblical text. I am increasingly convinced that the full authority of Scripture over the lives of Christian people can be effective only as and when we find a

fresh approach to its interpretation which will provide an alternative both to orthodox critical scholarship and to the traditional evangelical 'confessional' hermeneutic.⁹

Both Gladwin¹⁰ and Kirk have drawn attention to the problem of relating the present state of society to the Bible and to traditional ways of stating evangelical doctrines. They represent a movement within evangelicalism which finds that the inherited historical framework of Anglican confessionalism does not speak with relevance to today's world.

If evangelical Anglicans, as individuals or as churches, find that contemporary doctrinal expression takes a form which makes it appear irrelevant, what options are open? There would appear to be four, with considerable overlap between them.

First, in seeking for spiritual reality and existential relevance, some will express their faith in some form of world-denying theology with strong emphasis on worship and individual and group experience. The local church is restructured in its life-style, but there is little emphasis on organized evangelism or involvement in society. Secondly, there can be a reaffirmation of confessionalism, with a strong emphasis on the historical origins of the Anglican Reformed tradition (e.g. the Thirty-nine Articles). At its best, this method has the strength of historical continuity and a real concern for the importance of doctrine and the spiritual state of the contemporary Church of England.¹¹ Alternatively, the result can be theological ghettoism with a strong sense of evangelicalism being an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*. This can develop into a negativism in doctrine and ecclesiastical tradition which becomes unrelated to the spreading of the gospel. Thirdly, the Christian faith can be seen as being propped up by the life of the local church rather than by a carefully thought-out individual belief. Preaching becomes a comforting operation rather than a challenge to commitment. Fourthly, there can be a total neglect of older forms of doctrinal expression, which are regarded as the outmoded and outworn remnants of a discredited view of the Christian faith. The contemporary expression of the faith is seen as essentially discontinuous with the past. The immediate needs of the world dictate the life of the Christian in both its individual and corporate expressions. The eucharist is conceived as a central expression of celebration at the centre of the life of the community. It can symbolize politicized hopes and liberation from bondage to temporal social oppression. Revelation is conceived as discerning God's hand in the contemporary world in the light of the Christ-event.

These four models overlap to a considerable extent in any one church, but usually one will predominate. However, they are united by a common factor; the failure to see the necessity for contemporary biblical doctrine of the type that is at present being urged by writers such as Kirk and Gladwin. The fourth model shows the dangers of

this neglect. In it, the individual Christian seeks legitimation, not in response to the grace of divine revelation but in response to the needs of the world in which he attempts to discern revelation in disclosure-situations. This is the method behind the contemporary option of liberal Anglicanism, which perceives response to Christ as arising out of the study of God's activity in the changes and chances of this world.

Liberal Anglican theology

Liberal Anglicanism sees the *action* of the church in the world as more important than the *content* of what is believed. It questions whether the latter approach is capable of saying anything relevant about today's world. When theological reflection is seen as being largely concerned with interpretation of the world and man's experience within it, the question of authority drawn from past traditions and stated in propositional form is bound to be regarded as a side issue, as it is in the report *Christian Believing*. This document points to three present-day emphases in the Church of England: the emphasis on community (similar to Gibson's 'faith as life-style', quoted at the beginning of this article); the view of Christianity as an 'ongoing enterprise'; and the reduction in status of the theological formulations of the past.¹² Thus:

Jesus himself lives in the world of today not so much in his recorded words and actions as through the community which he founded but which may both in its teaching and manner of life have changed radically from anything he envisaged.¹³

The report is pervaded by what Lash has called the 'problem of discontinuity'.¹⁴ How can statements of theological significance from the past be seen as authoritative for the present? If they can no longer be seen as a determinant factor, what constitutes authority in Christian belief? Lash sees the decline in emphasis in doctrinal authority as arising from the appearance of historical consciousness:

For us, the experience and understanding of God in Christ is ineluctably mediated by a network of historical, exegetical and hermeneutical considerations, many of which seem in principle incapable of definitive resolution. It is as if a century and a half of historical consciousness had had the effect, not of bringing us into closer cognitive contact with our past, but rather of rendering that past *opaque*, unreadable.¹⁵

Thus the key question for modern theology is: How are we to maintain continuity with doctrinal expressions of the past, when we live in an age that is aware that historical factors and cultural conditioning have often been the controlling elements in the expression of the Christian faith? Lash indicates that some form which expresses Christianity as community life should become the locus of Christian conviction,¹⁶ a similar conclusion to that reached in *Christian Believing*. It might then be said that being a Christian is no more than

becoming a partaker of the current style of Christian community, practising a common but continuously variable tradition of prayer, service and seeking for God by means of what *Christian Believing* calls a 'voyage of discovery'.¹⁷

Some aspects of liberalism indicate that the problem of historical relativism noted by Lash is incapable of any real solution. Therefore we must give up our doctrines that speak of God as he is in himself, and have the honesty to admit that we have 'no other starting point than our ordinary experience of the world.'¹⁸ The contemporary corporate expression of the experience of God's people becomes the only possible starting point for theology. We cannot speak of the 'being' of God, but only of his activity in the world today. The emphasis falls on the analysis of the created order and man's place within it, seeking for clues that will lead us hopefully to affirm that there is a God and that he is at work. It is a radical re-projection or re-centering of our idea of God along the lines called for by J. A. T. Robinson in *Exploration into God*.¹⁹ In Gibson's words, we are now to expose 'the bones and sinews that lie within reality'.

This aspect of liberal tradition has roots in the important strand of Anglican theological method which sees the incarnation (or a contemporary demythologized substitute), rather than the atonement, as the centre of God's activity. The humanity of Jesus, and our response to his God-orientated responsive personality, are made the ground of our faith—not his coming among us from outside (or 'from above') as the appointed Saviour. Jesus is apprehended as a man within the historical process, demonstrating God's love by example, rather than as a Saviour who guarantees salvation to his followers in the historically verifiable events of crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. The emphasis on Jesus' life, rather than his death, means that the cross is seen as one event amongst many that give us clues to God's activity. A. M. Ramsey foresaw such a development more than twenty years ago.²⁰ Writing of the trends in Anglican theology since *Lux Mundi* (1889), he points to the way in which 'explanation rather than atonement can tend to dominate the theological scene' when the incarnation is used as starting-point. Further:

Again, with the Incarnation as its centre, the concept of revelation easily becomes somewhat intellectualised by a sort of rationalism... a tendency to speak as if we moved progressively from discerning God in nature to discerning Him in man, and thence to discerning Him in Christ—whereas it may be that it is only through knowing God in Christ that we are able to believe in Him in relation to nature and man.²¹

Since these words were written, some theologians have dispensed with the doctrine of the incarnation in its traditional forms and have moved on to doubt the necessity for particular sources of divine revelation.²² After all, if Jesus was a man, why bother with complications arising from outdated Greek metaphysical concepts? Why not

admit, with Robinson, that '...the ontic beam to which the web of classical theology has been fastened appears to have got the worm'²³ Robinson prefers to see the relationship of Jesus to God in functional terms, where Jesus is the man who lives out a godly life as the 'man for others'.²⁴ In using these categories, he is following the conclusions reached by Van Peursen²⁵ in an article much used by the radicals of the late '60s and early '70s. Van Peursen maintained that the history of human thought moved from a mythical stage, through an ontological stage to a functional stage. In this latter stage, the one in which we are now living, man does not ask *what* something is, but *how* it functions.

The question remains as to whether this method of thinking is adequate to replace the older forms of theology. H. E. W. Turner, in an extended discussion of Robinson's Christology, concludes that

there is an important Scholastic principle that 'operation follows being' (*operari sequitur esse*). This calls attention to the need to offer an adequate ontological grounding for unity in activity or operation. The functional cannot replace the ontological as the final target for Christology. Penultimate answers cannot be substituted for the ultimate questions which insist on raising their heads. Despite his obvious intention to the contrary, Robinson appears to be working a dimension short through his rejection of the supranaturalist frame and his refusal to push beyond the functional to the ontological in Christology.²⁶

As T. A. Smail has observed recently, 'In order to do what the gospel that he [Christ] does, he needs to be the one that the gospel affirms that he is.'²⁷

Just as the functional (what Christ does in his actions as response to his Father) has replaced the ontological (who Christ is in relation to his Father) as the main category of Christological thought, so it has influenced the area of theology that includes what man does in response to God. The main interest centres not in our status before God as forgiven or unforgiven sinners, but in our response to him as men and women created in his image. Two recent publications indicate this very clearly. The first of these is Vanstone's *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense*. The subtitle, *The Response of Being to the Love of God*, shows the author's interest in the significance of response. Vanstone speaks of the 'Kenosis of God', by which he means that 'God depends upon the creation for the issue of His love as triumph or as tragedy.'²⁸ In the created order, God is seen emptying himself of his self-giving love to the extent that the outcome of his will for the world is dependent upon man's response to his love rather than upon the sovereignty of the divine will. The emphasis is upon 'explanation rather than atonement' (Ramsey) and on moving from the created order to God. The second example of response-orientated theology is seen in *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. In this volume, belief is construed as response to life-situations: it is not orientated towards assent to orthodoxy conceived of as doctrinal truths. The relationship

of truth to faith is thought of in terms of integrity and sincerity of belief, rather than in terms of assent to propositions about God that are believed to be true. For instance, Richard Harries, in a chapter entitled 'True Unbelief', illustrates the problems of confronting the articulate unbeliever:

Before human suffering, faced with a person whose anger leads him not just to protest but to commit himself to the alleviation of this suffering, a person who, despite everything, is determined to live and live with courage, what can be said?²⁹

However, the problem of what can be said illustrates one of the main weaknesses of this method of doing theology. It is in danger of identifying itself so closely with the ambiguity of human experience that it feels *nothing* can be said. There is *nothing* certain about God that can be communicated, only a sharing and identification with the sufferer or the thinker in their private agony, just as the man Jesus shared our agony in his life and death. All statements of beliefs are 'tentative, provisional, incomplete and culturally conditioned attempts to interpret and to draw inference from revelatory experience.'³⁰

These books also aim to open up our eyes to the world around us and destroy the misunderstanding of Christian practice as that which fills a compartment of life labelled 'religion'. They focus on the mystery of what it is to function as a human being. The purpose of God's revelation in Jesus Christ is to open up 'our vision of the prophet, the pastor and the priest in Everyman.'³¹ Revelation is the revelatory experience of transcendence that is given to every person, even if he denies that he is a Christian. Theological activity is not the deduction and application of doctrines drawn from theological reflection on the Bible and inherited tradition, but is reflection on the contemporary experience of everyman as he encounters and interprets the created order. This is an attractive methodology, because it solves problems related to the historical continuity of Christian belief by ignoring them. They are concealed under a screen of contemporary literary and poetic interpretation of experience. Lash is aware of the attraction of this method—indeed, the title of his book *Theology on Dover Beach* is based on Matthew Arnold's famous poem which graphically describes the atmosphere of religious doubt and uncertainty which was a feature of Victorian intellectual life. Lash says:

Perhaps poetic discourse, articulating the felt experience of Christians in a situation of cultural upheaval, would be a surer guarantee of the faithfulness of our Christian speech than scholarship alone could be.³²

However, this approach is incapable of sustaining the task of Christian theology, which is rooted in an historical person and in an identifiable culture.

We have examined some of the trends and methods of contemporary liberal Anglican theology, which has evolved a theology of response in the light of a functional understanding of the work of Christ and the possibilities in man. When Christology is controlled by functional thinking, there is no logical necessity for an assertion of the uniqueness of Christ; he becomes another man, notable for the depth of his perception of God and the completeness of his obedience to the divine will. Functional thinking has subsequently spread from the Christological debate to the doctrine of man. All men are seen as potentially responsive to the grace of God, without the necessity for faith in an objective atonement that takes away sin. Salvation is seen as a potential inherent in all men as they respond to their ultimate destiny in Christ in their own chosen ways. The work and mission of the church is to foster and enable that response by working with all men who share a vision of liberty and freedom from human oppression.

We must now consider the future that faces evangelical Anglicanism, as it faces the claims and methods of the liberal alternative while at the same time seeking to preserve its own identity.

The future of evangelical Anglicanism

Having very briefly surveyed some features of the current trends in evangelical and liberal Anglicanism, we can suggest certain areas which need to be studied and lessons that need to be learnt by evangelical Anglicans.

First, evangelicals ought not to be at all surprised that they share in the identity problems and lack of confidence seen in the theology of the church and experienced by those who minister within it.³³ Sykes³⁴ has questioned whether Anglicanism can be said to have a 'coherent identity', when it embraces so many different theological traditions and is parasitic on methods of doing theology that have not arisen from within its own disciplines. I suspect that if evangelical Anglicanism fully realized the breadth of the identity problem in the church, it would have saved itself some of the introspection and self-analysis which affected the movement a couple of years ago and continues to this day. It is interesting to note that Sykes' plea for some form of systematic restatement of Anglican doctrine is similar in intention to the sentiments being expressed by writers such as Kirk and Gladwin from the evangelical side. This shows that the problems facing the whole church are not dissimilar to those being faced by evangelicals. It would be simple for evangelical Anglicans to ignore this, to withdraw from the wider theological enterprise of the church and revert to the bogus security of seeing themselves as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*. If they do this, they will certainly be regarded as refusing to take the Church of England seriously.

Secondly, evangelicals must continue to apply themselves to what is meant by revelation and authority in relation to religious experience and the Bible. This is a necessary follow-up to their recent studies on biblical interpretation. Volumes such as *New Testament Interpretation* have already moved along this line. For example, Nixon, in discussing the development of doctrine from interpretation of the New Testament, argues:

There is nothing absolute about the creeds and there is no *a priori* reason why the contemporary church should not seek to restate the doctrines which they contain in more modern thought-forms. Indeed this is the task of the church in every age in its role as 'a witness and keeper of holy Writ' This process of understanding and formulating is of course something quite different from that of adding to the faith of the Bible and of providing for the Bible a framework of interpretation which will not let it stand as it should in judgement over the church. The very fact of the number of questions that are open now is itself witness to the failure of the church at any period in history to provide a scheme of biblical interpretation which will satisfy the church at all subsequent times.³⁵

Such questions must be boldly faced. This will cause pain and paranoia to some who feel that the foundations of historic evangelicalism are being shifted, but the task must be undertaken if evangelical theology is to become more than a theological curiosity. Evangelicals need to face the major shifts in our understanding of man and his place in the universe which have occurred since the great theological controversies that resulted in the creeds and confessions. Liberalism never ceases to point to these changes,³⁶ but seems to be unable to offer anything except scepticism, and a radical transformation of the concept of revelation which sees it as a created reality rather than as a reality given from above.³⁷

There are signs that the liberal rejection of a plausible theology, based on historical continuity, is being challenged.³⁸ This and other challenges can only be met by entering into debate with the alternative solutions offered by the liberal methods. It must not only take place at the level of academic debate (university and theological college) but also in the life of the whole church. The aim should be to preserve and develop patterns of belief and ministry that bring people to a living faith in Christ and enable them to serve him in the church and world.

Thirdly, the debate about the significance of 'structures' and 'lifestyle', and the social implications of Christian belief, needs to go on. It may well be that evangelicalism will have to accept a realistic pluralism of practice and doctrinal expression, acknowledging that a variety of local situations requires a variety of responses. It does seem that it is impossible to construct a general theology of social involvement, especially when Christians are faced with such diverse patterns in contemporary society. It is certainly not true to the historical tradition of evangelicalism to argue that the movement has

been interested only in the preaching of the word and the saving of individual souls, to the exclusion of social concern. Admittedly, this view may have predominated when evangelicalism has been at its most defensive. The evangelicalism of such periods is, however, defective both in an understanding of its relationship to the wider church, and in an understanding of the purpose of the church in the world. At the moment, evangelicalism's renewed theological reflectiveness in the area of social responsibility is somewhat ahead of its realization of the need for doctrinal renewal. This means that the this-worldly emphasis of some evangelicals appears to be at variance with the more experiential, emotional and other-worldly emphasis of others. Furthermore, the gap between these poles may have been exaggerated by the charismatic movement, which itself has widened the spectrum of evangelicalism.

Fourthly, the life of the individual Christian and the local church needs to maintain its eschatological perspective. This does not mean neglecting the problems of the world. It does mean seeing this life as leading to a better one, and remembering that our activity and identity as Christians in this world is not an end in itself. Heaven is no mere footnote to the task of building the kingdom of God. The church has often paid heavily when it has forgotten this and set itself to transform the social order; the price has been identification with the social milieu in such a way that the gospel can no longer be heard as a call for repentance, but becomes a means towards a fulfilment which is found in this world. Faith can then be construed as ethical obedience to a secularized Jesus. This is the weakness of liberalism, in which the eschatological perspective becomes totally realized in secular models of freedom and fulfilment.

Fifthly, evangelicalism should be committed to evangelism. Evangelism is often caricatured as the activity of the lunatic fringe of paranoid religion. Thus it is either considered to be outmoded, or it is reinterpreted in terms of liberal concepts of the mission of the church in the world. A consequence of the latter view is that the church becomes swamped by the problems of changing a society which does not wish to understand the content of the gospel message.³⁹

Finally, evangelical Anglicanism is not as strong as its numbers appear to indicate. It would seem that its vitality within the wider Anglican communion is limited by the pervasiveness of both contemporary liberalism and of the uncertainty in every area of the church's life and doctrine. The increase in theological activity over the past fifteen years amongst evangelical Anglicans is not necessarily a sign of a similar increase in spiritual strength, or of the growth in significance of evangelicalism within the Church of England. The illusion of evangelical strength can unwittingly be fostered by much talk and publicity, originating from the leaders of evangelicalism who have failed to understand the extent of liberal Anglican theology. How-

ever, it is no use wishing liberalism away! Its historical background in Anglican and other theological traditions needs thorough investigation by those who take biblical authority seriously. If this is neglected, evangelicalism will become increasingly marginal to the pastoral and theological life of the Church of England and remain pre-occupied with its own internal problems.

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NOTES

- 1 P. Gibson, 'A Partisan Appeal for a Liberal Mission', *Theology*, vol. LXXXII, 1979, pp.163-69.
- 2 Gibson, *op.cit.* pp.165-66.
- 3 N. Lash, *Theology on Dover Beach* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1979) p.32.
- 4 See, for example J. Gladwin, *God's People in God's World: Biblical Motives for Social Involvement* (IVP, Leicester 1979) pp.107-8; C. Sugden, *Social Gospel or No Gospel* (Grove Books, Nottingham 1975); G. Forster, *Sin, Structure and Responsibility* (Grove Books, Nottingham 1978).
- 5 Forster, *op.cit.* p.24.
- 6 Gladwin, *op.cit.* pp.16-23.
- 7 cf. the anonymous article 'Some Key Doctrinal Issues', *Christian Graduate*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp.12-14; for a wider perspective of the identity problem (or 'crisis') see J. I. Packer, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem: An Analysis*, Latimer Studies no. 1 (Latimer House, Oxford 1978).
- 8 As an antidote to this see D. Gillett, *How do Congregations Learn?* (Grove Books, Nottingham 1979).
- 9 J. A. Kirk, *Theology Encounters Revolution* (IVP, Leicester 1980) p.10.
- 10 Gladwin, *op.cit.* p.23; speaking of inherited traditions Gladwin says, '... all of them present us with serious problems. The mainstream tradition of the Reformation is under question because of the plural character of modern society and the unique ethical dilemmas which that poses for the Christian today. The theological traditions which have used Greek concepts put a strain upon Christians, who have given a more substantial place to bodily and social life.'
- 11 D. N. Samuel (ed.), *The Evangelical Succession in the Church of England* (James Clarke, Cambridge 1979).
- 12 Church of England Doctrine Commission, *Christian Believing: The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds* (SPCK London 1976) pp.10-11. The whole chapter, 'The Pastness of the Past', is a valuable insight into changing methods in doctrinal conception in the Church of England.
- 13 *ibid.* p.11.
- 14 Lash, *op.cit.* pp.27-44.
- 15 *ibid.* p.29.
- 16 *ibid.* p.85: 'In practice, it would seem that it is in prayer and the "common life of the body of Christ", more fundamentally than in the quest for theoretical or historical certainty, that the sustaining and deepening of Christian conviction is to be sought.'
- 17 Doctrine Commission, *op.cit.* p.3.
- 18 M. Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (SCM, London 1974) p.25. See also the discussion of theological method in the chapter 'Continuity and Change' in A. Dyson, *We Believe* (Mowbrays, Oxford 1977) pp.105-24.
- 19 J. A. T. Robinson, *Exploration into God* (SCM, London 1967).

- 20 A. M. Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple* (Longmans, London 1960), especially chapter 2, 'The Incarnation, Man and Nature', pp.16-29. Long ago (1902) James Denny criticized those who put the incarnation in the place that belongs to the atonement. See his *The Death of Christ*, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Tyndale Press, London 1951) and many reprints, pp.177-80.
- 21 Ramsey, *op.cit.* p.28.
- 22 See, for example B. Mitchell and M. Wiles, 'Does Christianity Need a Revelation? A Discussion', *Theology*, vol. LXXXIII, 1980, pp.103-14. Wiles says, 'I believe that it is possible to construct a Christian theology on the basis of the evidence available to us, without assuming any special or privileged form of communication, but treating the biblical writers as "inspired" interpreters of the world and its history in a sense parallel to my "inspired" art critic' (p.113).
- 23 J. A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (SCM, London 1972) p.23.
- 24 *ibid.* p.21f.
- 25 C. Van Peursen, 'Man and Reality—The History of Human Thought', reprinted in *A Reader in Contemporary Theology*, J. Bowden and J. Richmond, (eds.) (SCM, London 1967) pp.115-26.
- 26 H. E. W. Turner, *Jesus the Christ* (Mowbrays, Oxford 1976) p.94.
- 27 T. A. Smail, *The Forgotten Father* (Hodder and Stoughton, London 1980) p.99. Smail's chapter entitled 'God the Father and God the Son' offers a valuable critique of functional views of Christ, pp.86-112.
- 28 W. H. Vanstone, *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense: The Response of Being to the Love of God* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1977) p.68.
- 29 R. Harries in E. James, (ed.), *Stewards of the Mysteries of God* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1979) p.59.
- 30 G. W. H. Lampe, *ibid.* p.28.
- 31 James, *ibid.* p.7.
- 32 Lash, *op.cit.* p.43.
- 33 R. Towler and A. P. M. Coxon, *The Fate of the Anglican Clergy: A Sociological Study* (Macmillan, London 1979); A. Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (SPCK, London 1980).
- 34 S. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Mowbrays, Oxford 1978) p.1.
- 35 R. Nixon, 'The Authority of the New Testament', in I. H. Marshall (ed.), *New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Principles and Methods* (Paternoster Press, Exeter 1977) pp.334-50.
- 36 An example can be found in J. A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God*, pp.19-35. Robinson's four shifts are the use of myth to signify 'what is deepest in human experience' (p.20), the eclipse of metaphysics, the 'demise of the language of the absolute' (p.23), and the end of historical security. See also D. Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God* (SCM, London 1980) pp.17-21.
- 37 Cupitt, *op.cit.* p.3. Cupitt's main thrust is that we must dispose of objective language in talking about God and use theological language in ways that express our desire 'to personify the ideal we live by' (p.133). We must reject the God of Christian orthodoxy with his demands upon us and seek to develop 'autonomous mature spirituality' (p.100).
- 38 Examples are C. Brown, 'History and the Believer', in C. Brown (ed.), *History, Criticism and Faith* (IVP, Leicester 1978) pp.147-216; D. Bebbington, *Patterns in History* (IVP, Leicester 1979).
- 39 J. R. W. Stott in *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Falcon/CPAS, London 1975) p.17, describes this as being due to the adoption of the 'standard ecumenical viewpoint' which regards the mission of God and the work of the church as social renewal regardless of belief.